United Nations A/C.1/53/PV.31

General Assembly
Fifty-third

First Committee

31st Meeting
Friday, 13 November 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman: Members have before them informal paper number 10, containing a list of draft resolutions on which action remains to be taken.

I call on the representative of New Zealand in connection with draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11, "Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty".

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): Adopted just over two years ago, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has now been signed by over 150 States, 21 of which have ratified it. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and its provisional Technical Secretariat are now well established in Vienna, and good progress is being made towards the establishment of the global verification system.

Last year, the General Assembly made no pronouncement on the status of the implementation of the CTBT. This year, Australia, Fiji, Mexico and New Zealand submitted draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11, because we consider it important and appropriate that the First Committee and the General Assembly should clearly demonstrate international support for the Treaty and a commitment to seeing it brought into force. The draft resolution before the Committee is straightforward. It has a single practical focus: to encourage further signatures and ratifications, and thus to promote the Treaty's early entry into force and the achievement of universal adherence.

The sponsors made a genuine effort to consult widely, with the purpose of reaching a text that could be adopted by consensus. Unfortunately, other issues have been at the forefront in the Committee, and we have not been able in the time available to achieve our aim.

The sponsors therefore propose to withdraw draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11.

The Chairman: I call on representatives wishing to make statements at this stage.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): In the light of the statement that has just been made by the representative of New Zealand, it is obvious that Pakistan will not insist on its proposed amendments to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11, contained in document A/C.1/53/L.53.

The Chairman: Is the representative of Pakistan prepared to consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11 without amendment?

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I understood from the statement by the representative of New Zealand that the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11 were withdrawing that text. It is in that light that we are willing to withdraw our amendments to the draft resolution.

Mr. Sorreta (Philippines): Before we go into sudden withdrawal with all these texts, let me say that we are a little disappointed to hear that the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11 will be withdrawing it. Many of us are parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and have worked very hard to create the

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provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBT Organization and to see it established in Vienna. We have had no resolution on the CTBT since the adoption of the Treaty itself.

We would urge the representative of Pakistan to reconsider the amendments he has proposed. We have seen this before; we saw it during the negotiations on the CTBT and have seen it during the life of the CTBT. But the Treaty now has a life of its own. I believe many of us would beg the sponsors of the draft resolution to reconsider their decision to withdraw it. We also call on those delegations that have proposed amendments if possible to reconsider their decision to put their amendments to the vote if the draft resolution is submitted again.

Mr. Fruchtbaum (Solomon Islands): The Solomon Islands delegation supports the statement just made by the representative of the Philippines. My delegation had looked forward eagerly to a knock-down drag-out fight to end a week of some of the finest theatre now showing in New York City. We indeed hope that the withdrawal of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11 will be reconsidered.

Ms. Stener (Norway): My country is a signatory of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and we are in the process of ratifying the Treaty. We would like to reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty by voting on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11 in unamended form. I take this opportunity therefore to support the appeal by the representative of the Philippines to the sponsors of the amendments to withdraw the amendments to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11.

Mr. Shin (Republic of Korea): For the reasons stated by the representative of the Philippines, my delegation would like to echo the appeal made to the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11 to reconsider their withdrawal of that text.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): As members know, Japan is among the countries that have both signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Japan attaches great importance to that Treaty, and therefore supported the straightforward draft resolution on the CTBT contained in document A/C.1/53/L.11. My delegation considers it important and appropriate for the First Committee to pronounce itself on that draft resolution in order to express the importance it attaches to the Treaty. I therefore add my voice to those of previous speakers in support of the statement made a moment ago by the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. De Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of New Zealand has already explained why the sponsors wish to withdraw draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11. It is because we attribute the highest importance to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and we would like to have a consensus. Unfortunately, time constraints — and especially because the Committee's attention is on other important matters — have prevented agreement on a text that would command consensus. We believe that the call for the signing and ratification of the Treaty should not be questioned. That is why we do not want to put this text to a vote; we do not want small differences over drafting to give the wrong message regarding how we feel about the Treaty as a whole.

All delegations certainly have the right under rule 80 [122] of the rules of procedure to reintroduce any draft resolution that has been withdrawn. If some delegations feel that it is more important to state their positions on this draft resolution than it is to preserve the integrity of the Treaty and not submit the call for ratification to a divided vote, let them assume responsibility for that.

My delegation has only one remaining doubt. That has to do with paragraph 4 of the draft resolution. If we recall correctly, last year there was a decision by the Committee — not a draft resolution, but a decision pure and simple — to place on this year's agenda the item entitled "Implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty".

I would appreciate it very much if you, Mr. Chairman, would suspend the meeting briefly to give us an opportunity to see whether we can reach agreement on a mere decision to be adopted by consensus to place on next year's agenda the item entitled "Implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty".

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Allow me to summarize the situation. We have before us a draft resolution, which is itself the subject of two draft amendments introduced by India and Pakistan respectively. The sponsors have agreed to withdraw the draft resolution. At the same time, several delegations are calling for the sponsors of the draft amendments to withdraw the amendments and for the draft resolution to be the subject of consensus. There is now a third possibility, which has just been proposed by the Ambassador of Mexico. I myself was going to propose a suspension of the meeting. If I hear no objection, I will take it that the Committee agrees to a

suspension so that delegations may consult on the best way to proceed.

The meeting was suspended at 3.25 p.m and resumed at 3.45 p.m.

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): It seems there is agreement that the Committee will consider a draft decision on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and I would propose that it be worded:

"The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the First Committee, recalling its resolution 50/245 of 10 September 1996, decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled 'Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty'".

Mrs. Kunadi (India): We request a vote on this proposed draft decision.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Since no delegations wish to explain their position at this stage, I call on the Secretary of the Committee to conduct the voting.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now proceed to vote on an oral proposal for a draft decision of the First Committee entitled "Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty", which will be issued in document A/C.1/53/L.65. The text of the draft decision would read:

"The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the First Committee, recalling its resolution 50/245 of 10 September 1996, decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled 'Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty'."

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Bhutan, India, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic

Draft decision A/C.1/53/L.65 was adopted by 135 votes to none, with 4 abstentions.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the draft decision just adopted.

Mrs. Kunadi (India): The Committee is aware of the circumstances leading to India's standing aside from the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. After concluding a limited series of tests in May this year, India announced a voluntary moratorium on further underground nuclear test explosions. We have conveyed our willingness to move forward to a *de jure* formalization of this obligation.

India, having harmonized its national imperatives and security obligations, and desirous of continuing to cooperate with the international community, is now engaged in discussions with key interlocutors on a range of issues, including the CTBT. As the Prime Minister of India stated before the General Assembly on 24 September 1998, India is

"prepared to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion, so that the entry into force of the CTBT is not delayed beyond September 1999". (*A/53/PV.13, p. 19*)

During the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament, India sought to place the Treaty in a disarmament framework by proposing its linkage to a time-bound programme for the universal elimination of nuclear weapons. The Treaty that emerged remained a partial measure.

India voted against resolution 50/245, by which the CTBT was adopted. Therefore, we abstained in the voting on the draft decision just adopted.

Mr. Sorreta (Philippines): Not surprisingly, the Philippines is somewhat disappointed at not having a draft resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) this year. However, it is our hope that the decision we have taken not to push for a draft resolution and just to have a draft decision will contribute, perhaps, to our having a CTBT resolution next year with very interesting and more welcome results.

Mr. Shin (Republic of Korea): We supported draft decision A/C.1/53/L.65, which the Committee has just adopted. This does not mean that we were satisfied with having no draft resolution this year on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which my delegation regards as very important. If the original draft resolution in document A/C.1/53/L.11 had not been withdrawn by the sponsors, we would have supported it very strongly.

The adoption of the CTBT by the General Assembly in 1996 was hailed as another great achievement of the international community towards strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. The cessation of all nuclear testing will no doubt constitute a meaningful step conducive to deterring the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to the realization of a systematic process to achieve nuclear disarmament.

However, as was made obvious by the nuclear testing in South Asia last May, the task of strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime requires, more urgently than ever, stepped-up vigilance against future nuclear testing by any other States. In this endeavour, we strongly believe that it is crucial to achieve the CTBT's entry into force and universal adherence to it at the earliest possible date. We hope that the international community can work closely together towards this common objective of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to achieve the eventual goal of nuclear disarmament.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of India on a point of order.

Mrs. Kunadi (India): I think this is a mere formality now, but we had submitted an amendment (A/C.1/53/L.64) to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.11. We would now, of course, formally withdraw that amendment, since the draft resolution in document A/C.1/53/L.11 has also been withdrawn.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of the Solomon Islands, whose request to speak earlier today went unheeded.

Mr. Fruchtbaum (Solomon Islands): I take the floor in order to put a proposal in particular to the Department for Disarmament Affairs and others who may be interested in the First Committee. When you ended the meeting this morning, Mr. Chairman, you wielded your gavel with the speed and authority of a Hollywood cowboy gunfighter at the OK Corral, and I am afraid that my sweet voice was not heard and my waving arms were not seen, which is why I should like to speak now.

My proposal derives from the discussion this morning concerning draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.48/Rev.1, "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". A number of representatives, particularly from the nuclear-weapon Powers, made the point — we have heard it on a number of occasions during this session and in previous sessions — that the strategy of nuclear deterrence ended the cold war and kept the peace. That statement has been made with such authority on a number of occasions, such as this morning, as to seem to indicate that there is no possibility of disagreement. As a university history teacher regularly facing young people who ask very difficult questions, I have long come to doubt the truthfulness of that claim for the strategy of nuclear deterrence. Therefore, I suggest that serious consideration be given to having at the Committee's next session at least a one-day forum, with a morning and an afternoon meeting, at which that issue — how the strategy of nuclear deterrence ended the cold war and kept the peace — can be debated.

Please let those permanent members of the Security Council that make that claim bring their historians, their political scientists and their military strategists to make the argument, and let those of us who have serious doubts

about it be able to respond in a very real and serious debate and dialogue. I think, and the Solomon Islands delegation thinks, that that would be most helpful in trying to get at some better and balanced understanding about that claim.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): We will now take up draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1, entitled "The Conference on Disarmament decision to establish, under item 1 of its agenda entitled 'Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament' an ad hoc committee to negotiate, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices".

I first call on those delegations wishing to speak in explanation of their position before action is taken on the draft resolution.

Mr. Grey (United States of America): I have asked for the floor to address the amendments contained in document A/C.1/53/L.51 which are proposed to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1. In our view, these amendments are neither necessary nor helpful in encouraging the Conference on Disarmament to continue its long awaited negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator and the mandate contained therein. The consensus to establish the Ad Hoc Committee was fragile. The negotiations ahead will be complex and no doubt difficult, and its terms of reference provide for the consideration of the kinds of ideas reflected in the amendments put forward by Pakistan.

Like the Governments of most nations represented here, my Government condemned the nuclear tests by India last May, as well as those subsequently conducted by Pakistan. That having been said, from our perspective we believe that following the nuclear tests last May we have made some progress with Pakistan and India in addressing our non-proliferation and disarmament interests. For its part, the United States wants to put its relations with Pakistan and India on a better footing. We also welcome the resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan, which we believe is crucial to addressing the core issues of their dispute.

We are also well aware that the current economic crisis affecting much of the world constitutes a grave challenge to Pakistan's stability. To meet this challenge, President Clinton has decided to support international lending required to support an International Monetary Fund rescue package for Pakistan. He will discuss this and other issues in a meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif next month. While Pakistan's economy will undoubtedly occupy part of the agenda between the two leaders, exploring ways to make further progress on non-proliferation and disarmament will be discussed as well.

We also welcome the fact that India and Pakistan have announced before the General Assembly their intention to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by September 1999 and to participate constructively in negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament for a fissile material cut-off. I note that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's statement on the fissile material cut-off treaty is perfectly consistent with the current text of the draft resolution before the Committee. For this reason, I appeal to my Pakistani colleague to withdraw his amendment to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1 so that we can take action on the draft resolution as it is.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): South Africa has long been a supporter of the negotiations for a fissile material treaty in the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that these negotiations are extremely important given the fact that fissile material is one of the most essential elements for the production of nuclear weapons. It is also our view that the fissile material treaty must constitute a disarmament measure and not only a non-proliferation measure. We also believe that to negotiate a fissile material treaty, it should form an integral step of a process of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

South Africa would have supported the amendment proposed by Pakistan in document A/C.1/53/L.51 to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24, if Pakistan had agreed to the deletion of the last few words of the amendment: "within a time-bound framework".

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Pakistan has consistently supported, for over 30 years, the goal of a treaty banning fissile materials. This goal has always been perceived by the international community as constituting a part of a comprehensive programme for nuclear disarmament leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This is also the approach of the vast majority of the membership of the United Nations.

In my statement to this Committee on 30 October 1998, following the introduction of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/53/L.24 by the representative of Canada, I explained the rationale for the amendments which my delegation has proposed, which are contained in document A/C.1/53/L.51.

Briefly, these amendments seek, first, to reflect the fact that the ban on fissile material production should be part of a comprehensive phased programme for nuclear disarmament and that the treaty must be a disarmament treaty and not only a non-proliferation measure.

Secondly, the amendments seek to note the fact that there are continuing differences among Member States on the scope and objectives of the Treaty, despite the adoption of the so-called Shannon Report. By the draft resolution in document A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1, the General Assembly would welcome the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on this subject and encourage its re-establishment at the next session. Pakistan was able to join in the consensus for the commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the basis of certain understandings and expectations which were evolved in our bilateral negotiations with the United States. These included our understanding that the objectives of South Asian security will be promoted through a cooperative rather than a coercive approach.

We were therefore deeply concerned at the initiative taken by the same country which has sponsored the draft resolution in A/C.1/L.24/Rev.1, on the fissile material treaty, to seek a denunciation specifically and singularly of the nuclear tests conducted in South Asia last May, without noting the distinctions between these tests and without taking into account the comprehensive framework for security which is required in South Asia.

I listened carefully to the statement by the Ambassador of the United States, urging Pakistan not to press the amendments in document A/C.1/53/L.51 to a vote. We appreciate the spirit in which this appeal to Pakistan has been made and we also appreciate the constructive dialogue which Pakistan and the United States are conducting, and which is not, I emphasize, on the basis of coercion, such as the coercion which is reflected in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) or in the nuclear testing draft resolution which this Committee approved yesterday.

Our dialogue takes into account, as is absolutely essential, the security environment and compulsions in South Asia. We welcome the partial steps taken by the United States to promote a cooperative environment in its relations with Pakistan, and we look forward to the complete elimination of sanctions and restraints as soon as possible. This will be essential to create the environment in which Pakistan hopes to join in the resumption of negotiations on the fissile material treaty at the 1999 session.

The forthcoming negotiations on the fissile material treaty are likely to be difficult and long, perhaps as long as the title of the draft resolution under consideration. It will be essential to first reach agreement on the scope and objectives of the treaty, on which such deep differences remain. This treaty must constitute both a disarmament measure and a non-proliferation measure. I wish to underline in particular that a halt in the production of fissile material can be acceptable to Pakistan only if it is implemented within the context of such a multilaterally negotiated, universally applicable and non-discriminatory treaty on fissile material.

It is on this understanding, and in response to the appeal made by the United States, which was not a sponsor of the discriminatory draft resolution in document A/C.1/53/L.22, adopted yesterday, that the Pakistan delegation is prepared to agree not to press the amendments in document A/C.1/53/L.51 to a vote.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The Committee will have taken note that Pakistan wishes to withdraw the proposed amendments in document A/C.1/53/L.51.

Mr. Benítez Verson (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Cuba will not insist on a vote on the amendments in document A/C.1/53/L.51, which we co-sponsored, in order to facilitate the taking of a decision on the important text before the Committee and on the understanding that draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1 in no way prejudges Cuba's final position on the scope and objectives of a future treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material.

As we have repeatedly stated both in the Conference on Disarmament and in this Committee, the treaty cannot become a new instrument for selective non-proliferation. Its scope must of necessity be broad. It must be a disarmament measure, one more step in the nuclear disarmament process and towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

Cuba therefore reserves the right to promote in the Conference on Disarmament its substantive positions

regarding the scope and objectives of the future treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material, if that body begins negotiations on the subject.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The sponsors of the draft resolution wish it to be adopted without a vote. There being no objection, I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1, entitled "The Conference on Disarmament decision to establish, under item 1 of its agenda entitled 'Cessation of the Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear Disarmament' an ad hoc committee to negotiate, on the basis of the report of the Special Coordinator (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein, a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices", was introduced by the representative of Canada at the Committee's 19th meeting, on 30 October 1998, and was revised on 2 November 1998.

The sponsors are listed in the draft resolution and in document A/C.1/53/INF/2/Add.2 and Add.4. Greece and Bulgaria have also become sponsors.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Does any delegation wish to explain its position before the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus? There being none, I take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1 was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for an explanation of position after the decision.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation joined the consensus on the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1. We attach great importance to a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

In this regard, we firmly believe that the negotiations should not be limited to the future production of fissile materials. As reflected in the Shannon Report, the reference to which in the draft resolution helped us to join the consensus, the mandate for the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee also includes negotiations on past fissile material production. Leaving out fissile material stockpiles would only legitimize the possession and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons. Therefore, after the conclusion of the fissile material cut-off treaty, no fissile material, nuclear programme or facility should be allowed to remain outside international safeguards. The conclusion of the treaty on fissile material should also promote international cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Since no other delegation wishes to speak, we have come to the end of the third stage of the work of the First Committee at its fifty-third session. All decisions on draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 63 to 80 have been taken.

Concluding statement by the Chairman

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I should now like to make the Chairman's traditional concluding statement. As my opening statement was in French, I shall make this statement in English.

(*spoke in English*)

We have concluded the last phase of the Committee's work, action on all draft resolutions and decisions. I would like now to take this opportunity to share with members some reflections on the work of the First Committee as we come to the conclusion of its work during the fifty-third session.

At the outset, let me commend all delegations for the constructive atmosphere that has characterized our deliberations in the past few weeks. Our work reflects well on the image of the United Nations as an institution devoted to advancing the common interests of mankind, even on matters related to sovereign interests and national security. I wish to express my appreciation to all delegations for contributing to this positive atmosphere, which is conducive to confidence-building, peaceful change and disarmament.

At this juncture, let me highlight some issues that appear to have been notable in the deliberations of the First Committee during this session. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation received considerable attention, as well they should have, given the significance of these issues for international peace and security. The Committee gave due consideration to the progress that has been made in scaling down nuclear weapons at both the unilateral and bilateral levels and in reducing the risk of nuclear war. Yet the deliberations also reflected the conviction of most member

States that the nuclear disarmament process should continue at a more rapid pace.

The member States also demonstrated their strong support for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), for the resumption of strategic nuclear arms reductions pursuant to the START process, and for the negotiation of a fissile material treaty.

This growing interest in accelerating the pace of nuclear disarmament has also been reflected in enlightened debate in this Committee over some new and innovative approaches to address the problem. I refer specifically to the deliberations on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.48, "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world", and to the Committee's continuing recognition of the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones, most recently with respect to their application in Central Asia and in Mongolia. Future historians will surely look upon 1998 as a year when the world's consciousness was abruptly raised about the magnitude and persistence of the global nuclear threat.

The nuclear tests this year in South Asia underscored several important lessons of the contemporary age, including a widespread public recognition that new nuclear armaments beget nuclear arms races, not disarmament. They reminded us that progress on non-proliferation cannot be taken for granted — an observation that continues to apply even though the membership of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has expanded this year to 187 upon Brazil's welcome decision to accede to that Treaty. These tests remind us once again that the potential horrors of nuclear war transcend national or regional geographic boundaries and hence require the urgent attention of all countries. And they remind us that nuclear disarmament is simultaneously a solemn national responsibility and a daunting global challenge. It is both appropriate and necessary, therefore, for the United Nations to remain closely engaged in deliberating on such issues.

I hope therefore that progress will be made in the next session of the Conference on Disarmament as it resumes its work on the fissile material treaty, negative security assurances and other issues that it may address, including the prevention of an arms race in outer space and further progress on nuclear disarmament.

With respect to chemical and biological weapons, there is a strong consensus in the Committee in support of ongoing efforts to strengthen the means to verify compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention and to bring that treaty — together with the Chemical Weapons Convention — closer to full universal membership.

Because many, if not most, disarmament issues involve profound global issues and interests, I also hope not only that the Disarmament Commission will continue its deliberations over the proposed special session on disarmament but that the General Assembly will ultimately convene such a session at the earliest possible date. On 20 January the Secretary-General stressed the central importance of disarmament to the global agenda and that "the United Nations has an essential role and primary responsibility in this field". It seems only fitting that an issue of such urgency should receive the level of attention that only a special session can provide. We must work collectively to achieve disarmament objectives, not just to debate them.

I note with some satisfaction that the world community is already making progress in achieving these objectives with respect to the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The Committee has accomplished much in that field, especially in being able to speak with one voice on the need to curb illicit arms trafficking, a deadly activity that continues to kill civilians, frustrate aspirations for national economic development and jeopardize regional peace and security.

The Committee has also demonstrated its full confidence in the leadership and judgement of the Secretary-General, as reflected in draft resolutions seeking his assessments on several issues relating to small arms and light weapons. This confidence is echoed in the respect that the Department for Disarmament Affairs has earned from all countries for its highly professional work as it now concludes its first year after having been re-established by the Secretary-General. I believe that that is due mainly to the activity and competence of the Under-Secretary-General at the Department for Disarmament Affairs, Ambassador Dhanapala. I thank him on behalf of all of us.

As disarmament and its associated security benefits become more institutionalized in international society, I am convinced that success in this area will be accompanied by significant progress in achieving development objectives. As the Secretary-General stated in his recent report on the work of the Organization,

> "Human security and equitable and sustainable development turn out to be two sides of the same coin." (*A/53/1, para. 228*)

That is the approach that is reflected in the draft resolution on the relationship between disarmament and development and in repeated additional statements by the Secretary-General. My own Government has also recently advanced the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable disarmament with respect to small arms and light weapons.

Whether it was addressing global nuclear disarmament or more specific problems pertaining to the small arms trade, the Committee has addressed all of these issues responsibly by recognizing the uniqueness of specific local conditions, but never losing sight of the broader global context within which progress must be pursued and assessed.

With respect to landmines, different approaches to address this issue still exist. Some countries prefer the universalization of the Ottawa process and some strict compliance with, and greater adherence to, Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its review process. I have every confidence that, in the interests of the numerous victims of these weapons, States will continue to promote the achievement of the final goal of eliminating landmines altogether through ways and means acceptable to all parties concerned.

Among other innovative proposals that the Committee deliberated on was the draft resolution concerning developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, a subject that potentially affects the interests of all countries and future controls over both conventional and unconventional weapons.

On the few matters that have given rise to disagreement within the Committee, I am convinced that these issues will in time yield to the patient and dedicated actions of all members who recognize the need to build a new global consensus to address such problems.

On a personal note, as Chairman of the Committee, I should like to thank all members of the Committee most sincerely for the cooperation they have extended to me during this session. It was indeed a singular honour and privilege for me to work with people so distinguished and knowledgeable in the field of disarmament. I wish to thank you all sincerely for all your efforts.

I also wish to express my deepest thanks and gratitude to the Vice-Chairmen of the Committee — Ms. Akmaral Arystanbekova, Ambassador Raimundo González and Mr. Aleg Laptsenak of Belarus — and to the Rapporteur, Mr. Motaz Zahran. I am deeply grateful for their assistance, camaraderie, advice and *mise en garde*.

Let me, on behalf of the Committee, thank again the Under- Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, as well as the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung and all his collaborators in the Secretariat. I want to thank especially all the young people behind me who run as *voltigeurs* in the room to fish for information and agreement. I thank them for the good job they have done.

Last, but not least, I wish to extend a special word of thanks to our interpreters, translators, record keepers, press officers, conference officers and documents officers, who have been patient with us, the sound engineers and all those others who worked behind the scenes to bring the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

I should like here to interpolate an administrative communication, about the next session of substantive work of the First Committee.

Representatives may recall that at the current session we had some difficulty in setting the dates for the commencement of the substantive work of the First Committee owing to an overlap with other disarmament-related meetings that were taking place in Geneva. The work of the Committee this year was postponed for one week, but the decision to delay the work of the First Committee this year should not set a precedent for our future work. In accordance with established practice, the substantive work of the First Committee should commence immediately following the closure of the general debate in the General Assembly. The exact dates for the next substantive session will therefore be established by the General Assembly at a later date.

In accordance with the Committee's practice, I will now call on the representatives of Groups.

I call first on the representative of Sudan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mrs. Ahmed (Sudan): The Group of African States fully associates itself with the statement which will be made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, to which we belong. On behalf of the Group of African States I wish to express our appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, and our congratulations on the successful manner in which you have conducted the work of the First Committee this year. The

discipline that prevailed under your able leadership enabled the Committee to conclude its work as scheduled.

I also wish to express my appreciation to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, whose presence enhanced the work of the Committee.

I also thank all the members of the Bureau, conference officers, interpreters, translators — all who contributed to our work.

In conclusion, on behalf of the African Group I wish to convey season's greetings and warm wishes for 1999.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of Oman, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Mr. Chairman, I am fully aware that this week was extremely hectic for you and for participating delegations, and I shall therefore be extremely brief. I hope that that will not be a problem for anyone, and that we shall all regard this concluding meeting as a good one.

I wish, on behalf of the countries that are members of the Group of Asian States, to associate myself with the remarks made by the representative of Sudan, whose statement on behalf of the African Group conveyed most sincere congratulations to you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau for the way in which the work of the Committee was conducted.There is no doubt that your diplomatic ability and your efforts helped us to reach practical and consensus solutions, leading to the gratifying and successful outcome of the work of the Committee in a timely fashion.

On behalf of the States members of the Asian Group, I cannot fail to thank Mr. Petrovsky and Mr. Abdel Kader Bensmail of the Conference on Disarmament, as well as Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for their persistent, quiet and meritorious participation, as well as for the role they have played in facilitating the work of the Committee.

The States of the Asian Group attach special importance to the work of the First Committee and are always ready to cooperate with other delegations and with the Chairman and the other Committee officers to achieve results acceptable to the entire international community, reflecting a spirit of participation, with a view to reaching the noble objectives to which we all aspire. We view negotiation as a principal characteristic of the work of the Committee, and one that is of singular importance.

Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by thanking you once again, and by expressing the hope that all members will enjoy further progress and a better and more prosperous future.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call next on the representative of Romania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern Enropean States.

Mr. Gorita (Romania): As Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States for the month of November, I should like to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, our sincere congratulations and our gratitude for the able way in which you have guided the deliberations of the First Committee to a successful and timely conclusion. Your wide knowledge, diplomatic skill and experience played a very important role in helping us overcome the difficulties we faced and in reaching this outcome.

Our gratitude goes also to the other members of the Bureau and to all those who supported them so effectively as they carried out their responsibilities, particularly the Secretary of the Committee, whose long experience has again been very useful this year.

I would also like to extend our appreciation to the interpreters, translators and conference officers. Without their effective support, we would not have been able to complete our session. I thank them all very much.

The Chairman: The next speaker is the representative of Australia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States.

Mr. Campbell (Australia): On behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, which my Permanent Representative, Ambassador Penelope Wensley, currently chairs, I wish to express to you, Sir, to Ambassador Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, to Mr. Petrovsky and Mr. Bensmail, Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament respectively, to the other members of the Bureau, to the Secretariat staff and not least to the interpreters and translators our appreciation for a job well done.

It has not been an easy session. Your steady hand on the Committee's tiller has steered us through the worst of the shoals. We are all facing a new and challenging year for the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and we hope that by the time we reconvene in this place next year we will be able to do so in an environment in which substantial progress has been made towards meeting our common goals.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the representative of Ecuador, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As Chairman of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, I congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on the efficient way in which you have guided the work of the First Committee to a positive conclusion. Your abundant diplomatic experience was essential to the success of this exercise.

I wish also, through you, to congratulate the Vice-Chairmen, the Rapporteur, Mr. Motaz Zahran, and the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States conveys special thanks to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, who has been with us throughout the session, and to Mr. Petrovsky and Mr. Bensmail, Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament respectively. Their experience has been a great asset in our work.

Our thanks go also to the members of the Secretariat staff, the conference officers, the interpreters and the translators for their exemplary work throughout the session that is now coming to a close.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call next on the representative of South Africa, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Non-Aligned Countries.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): On behalf of the States members of the Non-Aligned Movement and on behalf of other countries associated with the movement, I wish to extend our appreciation to you, Sir, and to the other members of the Bureau, as well as to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the Secretary of the First Committee, for the way in which you have led our work.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks to the Secretariat staff, the interpreters, the translators and other United Nations staff members who have been so essential to our work.

The Chairman: The next speaker is the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): We are about to close this year's session of the First Committee. Before we do, let me take this opportunity to say a few words of appreciation and thanks on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated country Cyprus, and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area.

I would like to offer you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on the successful conclusion of the Committee's work. This year, our proceedings included a number of challenging procedural debates, the handling of which was not always easy. Impressed by your chairmanship, I would like to offer you our heartfelt thanks for the excellent job you have done in making possible a comprehensive debate on the issues before us and orderly consideration of and action on all draft resolutions. I personally appreciated greatly your patience and impartiality and the serene way in which you conducted our business — as well as the necessary discipline that you so ably imposed on the Committee.

In the same vein, we wish also to thank the other members of the Bureau and all the staff of the Secretariat who supported them so effectively as they carried out their heavy responsibilities. A special word of gratitude goes to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala.

I would like to thank the Secretary of the First Committee, Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung, who after many years of untiring service to this body will be leaving us soon to take up a different, but equally challenging and rewarding, function. We wish him all the best for his personal and professional future.

Our deep appreciation goes also to the excellent interpreters, translators, sound engineers and conference officers and to those responsible for producing and distributing documents. Without their effective and ubiquitous support for delegations in a literally very audible and visible manner, we would not have been able to

complete our session so smoothly. I therefore thank them all very much for their invaluable contribution.

Finally, I would like to say how much importance we attach to good cooperation with all our colleagues present here in this room. In particular, we want to thank those with whom we have been engaged in direct negotiations. The European Union intends to continue these very fruitful discussions next year in the same spirit of mutual cooperation, and hopes that a constructive attitude will be adopted by all members. The European Union will equally endeavour to give the next Chairman of the First Committee its fullest support in the fulfilment of his high responsibilities.

With that positive look into the future, I wish once again, on behalf of all States associated with this statement, to congratulate you, Sir, on the outstanding way in which you chaired the Committee, and to extend to you our heartfelt gratitude.

The Chairman: The final speaker is the representative of Yemen, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Al-Doais (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the Arab Group, I wish to convey to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Bureau, my most sincere congratulations, thanks and appreciation for your meritorious and excellent efforts, courtesy, tact and patience, as well as your wise conduct of the work of the First Committee. I also wish to thank everyone who has worked here from the secretariat and interpretation and conference services for their excellent efforts during the meetings of the Committee. All this has been conducive to helping the First Committee achieve success within the time allotted to it.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): On my own behalf and in the name of those who have been thanked, I would simply say "Thank you".

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.